

Creative Approaches to Reading Comprehension

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A Model of Reading Instruction

Words

Accuracy in:

Phonics (Word Recognition)

Spelling

Vocabulary

Word Study

Fluency

Automaticity

Prosody

Fluency Instruction

Surface level

Deep level

Comprehension

Background Knowledge

Comprehension Strategies

Guided Reading

Defining Comprehension

Barrett's Comprehension Taxonomy

- Literal Comprehension – The text.
 - *Inferential Comprehension. The text and the reader.*
 - Critical Comprehension – The reader.
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Bloom's Revised Learning Taxonomy



Conventional Methods for Improving Comprehension

- **Improve prerequisite competencies - Common Core Foundations**
- **Build background knowledge for reading.**
- **Employ comprehension strategies:**
 - **Prediction (anticipation).**
 - **Compare and contrast (text to text, text to life, text to world).**
 - **Imagery (visual, aural, etc.)**
 - **Response to reading:**
 - **Discussions (talk).**
 - **Writing summaries (book reports).**
 - **Keeping journals.**

***Unconventional: Creative and
Transformative Response to Reading!***

To many scholars (as well as the general public), the ultimate form of understanding of something is the ability to create something new and different from what they have read. They transform it in some way to something new.

- *Scientists take what they have read (experienced) and transform it into new discoveries in medicine, science, technology.*
- *Artists take what they have read or experienced and transform it into new art works and forms of art.*
- *Poets take what they have read or experienced and transform it into poetry.*
- *Playwrites take what they have read or experienced and transform it into plays.*
- *We take what we have read or experienced and transform it into new forms of instruction for our students.*

Question: How can we make this Creative and Transformative Response work for our students?

Answer: *Have students transform the texts they read -- into a different form; or use the form of a text as a scaffold to express new content and knowledge. Copy -Change*

Real Life Examples of Copy Change

Setting

Time/Place: Irving Shulman, *West Side Story/Romeo and Juliet*

Charlotte Zolotow *Say It/One Step Two*

Fiona French, *Snow White in New York*

Dave Pilkey, *The Night Before Thanksgiving*

Howard Jacobs, *Cajun Night before Christmas*

Jenny Moss, *Cajun Night after Christmas*

Prequel/Sequel: Gregory McGuire, *Wicked*.

Country/Culture: Rafe Martin, *Rough-Face Girl*

Ai-Ling Louie, *Yeh-Shen*

John Steptoe, *Mufaro's Beautiful Daughters*

Shirley Climo, *The Egyptian Cinderella*

Point of View Jon Scieszka, *True Story of the Three Little Pigs*

Gender Shirley Climo, *The Irish Cinderlad*

Robert Muncsh, *Paper Bag Princess*

Form/Genre Stephen Sondheim & Leonard Bernstein, *West Side Story*

Do the creators of these new works have an understanding of the original piece they borrowed from?

Do the creators of these new works engaged in authentic, engaging, and creative work that allows them to become more skilled in the crafts of writing and other forms of creation?

TWO APPROACHES TO TEXT TRANSFORMATIONS

I. Keep the content; Change the form

The content of a text can be transformed into new forms:

A script.

A story

A poem

A song

A monologue

A dialogue

A speech.

A letter

A journal entry

A story sequel A prequel

A commercial

A specific book form

Sylvester and the Magic Pebble

William Steig

Sylvester Duncan lived with his mother and father at Acorn Road in Oatsdale. One of his hobbies was collecting pebbles of unusual shape and color.

On a rainy Saturday during vacation he found a quite extraordinary one. It was flaming red, shiny, and perfectly round, like a marble. As he was studying this remarkable pebble, he began to shiver, probably from excitement, and the rain felt cold on his back. “I wish it would stop raining,” he said.

To his great surprise, the rain stopped. It didn’t stop gradually as rains usually do. It CEASED!

From: Steig, W. (1969). *Sylvester and the Magic Pebble*. New York: Simon and Schuster.

Keep the content, change the form. Some possibilities:

- **Create a readers theater script from this excerpt. Add dialogue, monologue, and narration to fill out the beginning of this great story.**
- **Create a journal entry that Sylvester may have made in his journal that evening.**
- **How did Sylvester develop an interest in pebbles. Write a prequel that describes the event(s) that led to Sylvester's fascination with pebbles.**
- **Describe Sylvester using the text pattern of Yankee Doodle (copy change – keep the form, change the content).**

Sylvester Duncan went.....

Examples of Copy-Change (Keep content, change form)

What to the Slave is the Fourth of July?

Frederick Douglass

July 5, 1852

Mr. President, Friends and Fellow Citizens: He who could address this audience without a quailing sensation, has stronger nerves than I have. I do not remember ever to have appeared as a speaker before any assembly more shrinkingly, nor with greater distrust of my ability, than I do this day. A feeling has crept over me, quite unfavorable to the exercise of my limited powers of speech. The task before me is one which requires much previous thought and study for its proper performance. I know that apologies of this sort are generally considered flat and unmeaning. I trust, however, that mine will not be so considered. Should I seem at ease, my appearance would much misrepresent me. The little experience I have had in addressing public meetings, in country schoolhouses, avails me nothing on the present occasion. ...

What, am I to argue that it is wrong to make men brutes, to rob them of their liberty, to work them without wages, to keep them ignorant of their relations to their fellow men, to beat them with sticks, to flay their flesh with the lash, to load their limbs with irons, to hunt them with dogs, to sell them at auction, to sunder their families, to knock out their teeth, to bum their flesh, to starve them into obedience and submission to their masters? Must I argue that a system thus marked with blood, and stained with pollution, is wrong? No! I will not. I have better employments for my time and strength than such arguments would imply. What, then, remains to be argued? Is it that slavery is not divine; that God did not establish it; that our doctors of divinity are mistaken? There is blasphemy in the thought. That which is inhuman, cannot be divine! Who can reason on such a proposition? They that can, may; I cannot. The time for such argument is past.

What, to the American slave, is your 4th of July? I answer: a day that reveals to him, more than all other days in the year, the gross injustice and cruelty to which he is the constant victim. To him, your celebration is a sham; your boasted liberty, an unholy license; your national greatness, swelling vanity; your sounds of rejoicing are empty and heartless; your denunciations of tyrants, brass fronted impudence; your shouts of liberty and equality, hollow mockery; your prayers and hymns, your sermons and thanksgivings, with all your religious parade, and solemnity, are, to him, mere bombast, fraud, deception, impiety, and hypocrisy—a thin veil to cover up crimes which would disgrace a nation of savages. There is not a nation on the earth guilty of practices, more shocking and bloody, than are the people of these United States, at this very hour.

Go where you may, search where you will, roam through all the monarchies and despotisms of the old world, travel through South America, search out every abuse, and when you have found the last, lay your facts by the side of the everyday practices of this nation, and you will say with me, that, for revolting barbarity and shameless hypocrisy, America reigns without a rival.

A Readers' Theater for 4 voices

Lorraine Griffith and 4th Grade Students

Narrator, Readers 1, 2, 3, 4

NARRATOR: You are going to hear a speech given by Frederick Douglass at an Independence Day Celebration in 1852 in Rochester, NY. At that period in history, most black Americans did not observe Independence Day on July 4th. They had not yet found the freedom most white Americans enjoyed. In this speech Douglass fought with words for the freedom of fellow blacks still enslaved. Three speakers will share the powerful words of one articulate man, Frederick Douglass.

ALL: "What to the American slave is your Fourth of July?"

R1: Fellow citizens,

R2: pardon me,

R3: allow me to ask,

ALL: Why am I called upon to speak here today?

R3: What have I, or those I represent, to do with your national independence?

R2: Are the great principles of political freedom and of natural justice, embodied in that Declaration of Independence, extended to us?

R1: And am I, therefore, called upon to bring our humble offering to the national altar, and to confess the benefits and express devout gratitude for the blessings resulting from our independence to us?...

ALL: What to the American slave is your Fourth of July?

R1: I answer, a day that reveals to him, more than all other days in the year, the gross injustice and cruelty to which he is the constant victim.

R2: To him, your celebration is a sham; ...

R3: your sounds of rejoicing are empty and heartless;

R1: ... your shouts of liberty and equality [are] hollow mockery;

R2: your prayers and hymns are to him mere fraud and hypocrisy –

R3: a thin veil to cover up crimes which would disgrace a nation of savages.

ALL: There is not a nation on the earth guilty of practices more shocking and bloody, than are the people of these United States, at this very hour.

R1: Go where you may,

R2: search where you will,

R3: roam through all the monarchies and despotisms of the Old World,

R2: travel through South America,

R1: search out every abuse,

R3: and when you have found the last,

ALL: lay your facts by the side of the everyday practices of this nation,

R1: and you will say with me that,

R2: for revolting barbarity and shameless hypocrisy,

R3: America reigns without a rival.

ALL: And I ask again... What to the American slave is your Fourth of July?

MORE TRANSFORMATIONS

A New Year's Poem

**Another fresh new year is here . . .
Another year to live!
To banish worry, doubt, and fear,
To love and laugh and give!**

**This bright new year is given me
To live each day with zest . . .
To daily grow and try to be
My highest and my best!**

**I have the opportunity
Once more to right some wrongs,
To pray for peace, to plant a tree,
And sing more joyful songs!**

William Arthur Ward

A New Year's Poem (Take Two)

Reader 1

**Another fresh
New year is here...**

Readers 1-2

Reader 2

Another year to live!

**To banish worry, doubt, and
fear,**

To love and laugh and give!

**This bright new year is
given me**

To live each day with zest . .

**To daily grow and try to be
my highest and my best!**

I have the opportunity

**Once more to right some
wrongs,**

To pray for peace,

to plant a tree,

And sing more joyful songs!

For more poems for two voices see Paul Fleischman's Joyful Noise and I am Phoenix.

II. Keep the form; Change the content

The form or pattern of certain book, poem, song, or other text are distinct and can serve as a structure or scaffold for exploring new content (content that perhaps was learned in the prior reading of another text).

Keep the form; Transform the general content into the new form; Change one (or more) key aspect of the content.

Location

Season

Time of Day

Age of characters

Gender of Characters Culture of characters

Topic

Pattern Texts Work Well for Keeping the Form Changing the Content

The Important Book

The important thing about a spoon is that you eat with it. It's like a little shovel. You can hold it in your hand. You can put it in your mouth. It isn't flat. It's hollow, and it spoons things up. *But the important thing about a spoon is that you eat with it.*

The important thing about a shoe is that you put your foot in it. You walk in it and you take it off at night. And it's warm when you take it off. *But the important about a shoe is that you put your foot in it.*

Wise, Margaret. (1949). *The Important Book*. New York: HarperTrophy.

Notice the pattern that the author has taken to describe everyday object.

Use this pattern to describe other things or people you may have been studying such as clouds, states, cities, presidents, animals, fish, yourself, holidays, characters from books.

Character analysis: Describe Sylvester from *Sylvester and the Magic Pebble*.

The important thing about Sylvester Duncan is that he

(Collect students' essays and publish as a book that can be read, reread, and performed)

Clever Alphabet Books

Q is for Duck -- (Critical Features)

Q is for Duck because Ducks Quack

Describe Sylvester and other William Steig characters using the pattern found in *Q is for Duck*.

A is for Sylvester, because _____

B is for Shrek, because _____

C is for Dr. DeSoto, because _____

Tomorrow's Alphabet --- (Cause-Effect)

A is for Seed, Tomorrow's Apple

Use this pattern to describe features of the weather.

A is for height, tomorrow's altimeter.

B is for wind and snow, tomorrow's blizzard

C is for vapor, tomorrow's clouds.

D is for a lack of rain, tomorrow's drought.

E is for _____

***I am the Dog; I am the Cat* (Compare – Contrast)**

Dog: I am the dog. I like bones. I like to *bury* bones. As for eating, I can take it or leave it – but I like it when *they* feed me.

Cat: I am the cat. I don't care whether feed me or not as long as I get fed. Sometimes I tease them to feed me, then I turn my nose at what I get.

Dog: Making the acquaintance of babies, I allow them to pull my hair: I do not like it, but I allow it, for I am the dog.

Cat: When babies come into the house, I try to vanish. Babies are crazy! Babies sit on you!

Dog: I am nervous when I hear thunder, firecrackers, or guns, and nothing they say will comfort me.

Cat: Nothing frightens me. It's not that I'm brave. It's just that nothing frightens me.

Cat: Dogs are nervous and well-meaning. It is well-known that cats are at the same time independent, selfish, fearless, beautiful, cuddly scratchy, and intelligent.

Dog: Cat's just don't care. Only a god is at the same time dignified, guilty, sprightly, obedient, friendly, vigilant, and soulful.

Hall, Donald. (1994). *I am the Dog; I am the Cat*. New York: Dial Books.

Books Whose Form Lend Themselves to Transformations

<u>Form</u>	<u>Title</u>
List (enumeration)	Q is for Duck: An Alphabet Guessing Game (Mary Elting) Tomorrow's Alphabet (George Shannon). Everyone Needs a Rock (Byrd Baylor) One Lighthouse, One Moon (Anita Lobel)
Associations	Brown Bear, Brown Bear (Bill Martin Jr.) I Love You (Jean Marzollo) I Went Walking (Sue Williams)
Dialogue (conversation)	Tell Me a Story Mama (Angela Johnson) Frog and Toad (Arnold Lobel) Knots on a Counting Rope (Bill Martin Jr. and John Archambault)
Diary (monologue)	Diary of a Worm (Doreen Cronin) Look to the North (J. C. George)
Letters	Dear Levi – Letters from the Overland Trail (Elvira Woodruff). Dear Austin – Letters from the Underground Railroad (Elvira Woodruff).
Short Descriptions (observations)	Seven Brave Women (Betsy Hearne) The Important Book (Margaret Wise Brown) One Day in the Tropical Rain Forest (J. C. George)
Metaphor/Simile	Love is a Handful of Honey (Giles Andreae) My World of Color (Margaret Wise Brown) The Ocean Is (Kathleen Krinking)
Moral (Fable)	Fables (Arnold Lobel)

Compare and Contrast	<p>I am the Dog, I am the Cat (Donald Hall).</p> <p>Rosie and Michale (Judith Viorst)</p> <p>A Whale is Not a Fish (Melvin Berger)</p> <p>My Mom Travels a Lot (Caroline Feller Bauer)</p> <p>That's Good, That's Bad (Margery Cuyler)</p> <p>Fortunately. (Remy Charlip)</p> <p>Outside, Inside (Carolyn Crimi)</p> <p>Yummy Yucky (Leslie Petracelli)</p>
Cause and Effect	<p>If You Give a Mouse a Cookie (L. Numeroff)</p> <p>When I was Little (Jamie Lee Curtis)</p> <p>When I was Five (Arthur Howard)</p> <p>Tomorrow's Alphabet (George Shannon)</p> <p>This is the House that Jack Built</p>
Circular Stories	<p>If you Give a Moose a Muffin (L. Numeroff)</p>
Questions	<p>Did You Hear the Wind Sing Your Name (Sandra De Coteau Orie)</p>
Sequencing/Narrative	<p>Alexander and The Terrible, Horrible (J. Viorst)</p> <p>Mice and Beans (Pam Munoz)</p>
Sequencing/Cumulative	<p>The House that Jack Built (author unknown)</p>
Writing Scaffolds	<p>If I were in Charge of the World (Judith Viorst)</p> <p>In the Small, Small, Pond (Denise Fleming)</p>
Writing Voice	<p>Dirty Laundry Pile: Poems in Different Voices (Paul Janeczko)</p> <p>Once Upon a Cool Motorcycle Dud (Kevin O'Malley)</p>
Two Voice Poetry	<p>Joyful Noise (Paul Fleishman)</p> <p>You Read to Me, I'll Read to You (Maryann Hoberman).</p>

PREVOKE
Prediction Based on Vocabulary: A Comprehension Strategy

For Being Good

Philip	leaking bicycle tire	“Goodnight son”
Grandfather	“he misses ____”	
remembers	“listen for the reindeer”	
worries	blue veined hands	
pictures	scared and nervous	
embarrassed	dark haired boy	
cookie dough	presents	
candle glow	grandfather’s room	
wink	“Goodnight, Grandpa”	

Sort Categories

Setting				Interesting/Unusual
<u>Time/Place</u>	<u>Characters</u>	<u>Problem</u>	<u>Resolution</u>	<u>Words or Phrases</u>

***Predictions* -- Predict what will happen in this story?**

Write your prediction as a story summary – no more than 100 words

From: Rylant, C. Children of Christmas: Stories of the Season



Tableau

(Freeze Frames)

What is Tableau?

Students make a series of frozen pictures to help break down a story, analyze the sequence of events, identify the important aspects of the story, and bring it to life. Their expressive faces, body poses, and how they pose in relationship to one another creates a living picture or sculpture. In its simplest form students simply freeze to capture a moment in time. Teachers can apply this strategy to history, literature, or visual art, and they can expand the strategy to include dialogue. Teachers can use Tableau with all ages.

- Tableaus tell a clear story about events, people or place.
- Tableaus develop empathy or emotions of characters in the story.
- Tableaus require students to focus their attention and freeze their bodies and faces to show action.
- Tableaus require attention to composition:
 - position of bodies to create interest and understanding
 - varying of body levels (high, middle or low positions)

Why Use Tableau?

Tableau is an effective strategy to develop student comprehension because students must envision the action and events they read about in the text. This strategy supports students' understanding. In the process of creating Tableaus students are involved in developing their senses, building and activating background knowledge, asking questions, determining what is important, making inferences, and synthesizing the material they have read. It also introduces the actors tools and skills of body, voice, and imagination.

Research support:

- Dramatic activities are crucial to early literacy development because children can be involved in reading and writing as a holistic and meaningful communication process (McNamee, McLane, Cooper, & Kerwin, 1985). In addition, researchers have discovered that the mental requirements for understanding drama are similar to those for reading. For instance, the meaning of a reading is generally grasped in a transaction between the reader and the text. "Process drama" refers to a teaching method that involves children in imaginary, unscripted, and spontaneous scenes, in which the meaning is made from the engagement and transactions between the teacher and students (Schneider & Jackson, 2000). In addition, reading can also stand for a "process of interpreting the world," which endorses drama as a powerful learning medium because it provides a context for children to relate to their lived experience. In writing development, children who experience drama also appear to be more capable of making appropriate linguistic choices as well as expressing opinions or suggesting solutions (McNaughton, 1997).
- Teachers need to know that being fun, interesting, and entertaining is only one dimension of drama and theatre, which provides engagement for students to learn and to discover. As McMaster (1998) advocated, drama can be an invaluable teaching method, since it supports every aspect of literacy development. From

developing their decoding knowledge, fluency, vocabulary, syntactic knowledge, discourse knowledge, and meta-cognitive knowledge to comprehension of extended texts. Drama and theatre in many ways educate children as a whole.

Implementing Tableau in the K -8 Classroom

How can I use my face and body to share my understanding of a story?

(FREEZE FRAME)

For Beginning, Middle, and End Storytelling

STANDARDS:

In the Arts –

The student will understand and use artistic processes to create, perform, and respond

The student will:

- Understand the elements of theater, including plot, theme, character, language, sound, and spectacle
- Use movement, sound, and language to create images and express ideas;
- Create characterizations of animals, objects, or shapes
- Create a character based on fiction or life experience using movement, voice
- Communicate a story and character using voice, movement and imagination.

Through the Arts – Language Arts Standards

The student will use a variety of strategies to develop and expand reading, listening and speaking vocabularies.

The student will actively engage in the reading process and use a variety of comprehension strategies to understand the meaning of texts that have been read or listened to.

- Demonstrate literal comprehension by asking and answering questions about narrative and informational text.
- Make predictions about story content.
- Relate texts to prior knowledge and experiences.
- Demonstrate literal and inferential comprehension by asking and answering questions about narrative and informational text.
- Make predictions of outcomes and verify from texts.
- Make simple inferences and draw and support conclusions.

OBJECTIVE:

- Students will use their prior knowledge, senses, infer, and synthesize information to retell the beginning, middle, and end of a story.

- Students will use the actor's tools of imagination, body and facial expression (and voice when cued) and the actor's skills of focus and cooperation to interpret the thoughts and feelings of a character and/or the dramatic action of a key moment in a story.

PROCEDURE:

1. Choose a text
 - To begin with, choose a text with which students are familiar.
 - It should be simple
 - Include events
 - And be a story that can be done by a group of 2 or more
2. Explain the task to students—what is your intended learning or focus?
 - Sequence of story
 - Beginning, middle and end
 - Develop summary of the story—what is important?
 - Develop comprehension of place, character, or plot, main event
 - Etc.
3. Share the assessment rubric.
4. Do warm-ups: support focus, develop same space, comfort, awareness of the group.
5. Read, reread the story.
6. Discuss the story
 - Ask questions to elicit impressions:
 - What do you remember? What words or phrases do you remember?
 - What colors did you see in your mind's eye, your imagination?
 - What sounds did you hear?
 - If you were to title this story what might it be?
 - Ask questions to elicit responses pertaining to comprehension and clarity:
 - What happened?
 - Who are the characters?
 - Where does the action take place?
 - Ask questions about what might be a beginning/middle/ending picture.
7. Describe tableau guidelines.
 - Define acting area: where they perform, classroom "stage."
 - Explain tableau cues: eyes closed, hand claps, chimes.
 - Clarify expectations for cooperative work:
 - every person on their team has to be in the tableau
 - listen to every one's ideas
 - be respectful and supportive of your team members
 - we agree to imagine together—to be in the same story at the same time
 - Emphasize focus, frozen stance, and silence of tableau scene.
8. Divide students into three groups; students can count off by threes. Each number will create a tableau for the appropriate scene in the sequence.
9. Provide time for planning and rehearsal; teacher may coach individual groups in the use of the actor's tools and skills.
Actors Tools and Skills:
Body, face, voice, and imagination (physical, emotional and psychological)
10. Gather students to present tableau:
 - Explain expectations for respectful audience members and appropriate response at end of each tableau.
 - Reference assessment checklist.
11. Present the tableau. Each group will present while remaining groups serve as the audience.

- Cue the student actors to begin the tableau.
 - View the tableau.
 - Cue the student actors to end the tableau.
 - Audience responds:
 - Descriptive review (mini VTS)
 - What did you see?
 - What do you think is going on?
 - What do you see in the tableau that makes you say that?
12. Reflect on the tableau; use assessment checklist to invite discussion of tableau.
 13. Revise the tableau.
 14. Re-create the tableau.

Resources:

Clyde, Jean Anne, Breakthrough to Meaning: Helping your Kids Become Better Readers, Writers, and Thinkers, 2006, Heinemann, Portsmouth, NH.

Eric Digest: Using Drama and Theatre to Promote Literacy Development: Some Basic Classroom Applications, Prepared by: Ping-Yun Sun.

Kelner, Lenore Blank, The Creative Classroom: A guide for Using Creative Drama in the Classroom, Prek – 6, 1993, Heinemann, Portsmouth, NH.

Kelner, Lenore Blank, A Dramatic Approach to Reading Comprehension: Strategies and Activities for Classroom Teachers, 2006, Heinemann, Portsmouth, NH.

The Kennedy Center, Living Pictures: A Theatrical Technique for Learning Across the Curriculum, 2002, The John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts.

Stages Theater Company, Freeze Frames, In My Own Voice- Responding to Life and Literature Through Playwriting.

Wilhelm, Jeffrey, Imagining to Learn: Inquiry, Ethics and Integration Through Drama, 1998, Heinemann, Portsmouth, NH.

POSSIBLE SENTENCES (A Prediction Strategy)

Key Words

A.I.D.S.	INFECTION	FUNGI	LYME DISEASE
FEVER	CONTAGIOUS	RINGWORM	PATHOGENIC
SYMPTOMS	FLU	H.I.V.	CHICKEN POX
MEASLES	POLIO	MENINGITIS	BACTERIA
VACCINE	ANTIBIOTICS	DEER TICK	IMMUNE SYSTEM

T	F	POSSIBLE SENTENCES
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1. _____ *A.I.D.S. is caused by H.I.V.*

Corrected Sentence: _____

2. _____ *Bacteria causes polio.*

Corrected Sentence: _____

3. _____ *There is a vaccine for the Flu.*

Corrected Sentence: _____

4. _____ *Fever is a symptom of ringworm.*

Corrected Sentence: _____

5. _____ *The Immune System creates antibiotics.*

Corrected Sentence: _____